

step UP!



First Anniversary Report: AUGUST 2011 – AUGUST 2012

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Mayor's Message

In these tough economic times, cities have to tackle difficult challenges with fewer resources. That's why I created **stepUP! to activate Baltimore residents to help tackle what they identify as the city's most serious problems.**

Since then, people are reaching out across the boundaries that separate us, showing that we care about each other and the city we all call home. By getting involved in solving our city's toughest challenges, they're helping to get Baltimore growing again. Citizen volunteers are revitalizing hundreds of abandoned and vacant lots; helping hundreds of people in drug treatment transition successfully into long-term recovery from addiction; connecting dozens of youth in the justice system to professional and social networks they otherwise wouldn't have access to; and providing more than a thousand kids nutritious meals and learning experiences over the summer.

It's been a very busy year, but we're not done yet. I'm pleased to announce we're deploying our city's residents to make an impact in two more priority areas: making sure our most vulnerable students are reading proficiently by the end of third grade, and supporting them and their schools to increase their attendance.

stepUP! is truly deploying the power of people, directing and focusing their energy, and setting measurable goals for success. People like you are changing lives across the city. People like you make stepUP! possible. Thank you for your commitment to making Baltimore better, safer, and stronger.



Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake



Power in Dirt

Power in Dirt transformed how Baltimore tackles vacant lots, making it easier for residents who have always wanted to improve their neighborhoods to finally get involved. Power in Dirt made information about vacant lots fully transparent and readily available to the public, significantly streamlined the process to gain legal right-of-entry onto vacant lots through adoption, made the adoption agreement flexible and friendly to all the different ways community open space can be used, created a new program to provide residents access to water for their lots, and provided additional resources and support to help residents transform their lots.

Power in Dirt Impact

- 737 lots adopted, totaling 1.4 million square feet or 31.6 acres
- 80% of these lots revitalized and maintained
- 34% of these lots growing food
- 35% overall reduction in service requests to clean up trash on blocks with adopted lots

Go to <http://www.powerindirt.com> to get started on your own vacant lot project!

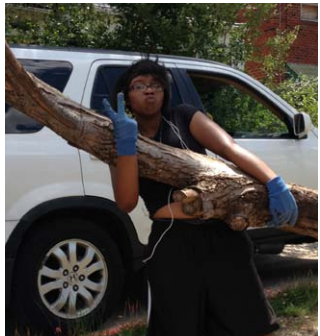
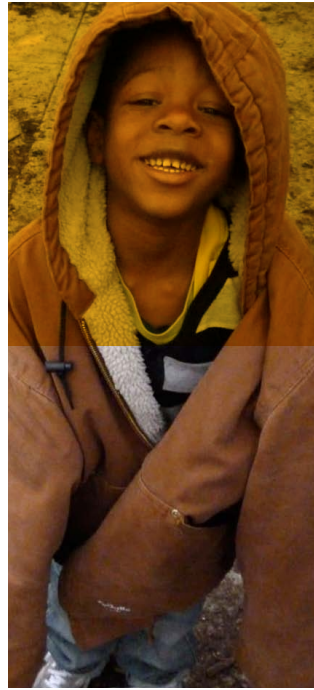


"It's our responsibility to make sure this lot looks great all the time, because we live here. We're going to keep it going because it's our home. It's not a field trip for us."

Earl Johnson, resident of Oliver neighborhood



“All these vacant lots offer a goldmine of possibilities”



Baltimore Profiles: Estelle

Just a year ago, the vacant lots on N. Monroe Street were a community eyesore. No one could imagine anything else other than the weeds, garbage, and rats. But Estelle and Tony thought otherwise. They had recently moved to Baltimore and bought a row house they are renovating into their dream home. Just as they saw potential in the row house, they recognized the potential in the vacant lots in their neighborhood.

“The vacant lots were just like blank canvasses, especially considering how strong the sense of community is in the neighborhood,” said Estelle. “All these vacant lots offer a goldmine of possibilities, from gardens to children’s play spaces and beyond.”

Estelle and Tony adopted two vacant lots and, with the help of community members, they are transforming them into a beautifully landscaped community garden. They’ve made great progress in just the past few months. They are constructing a red brick walkway and a wrought iron fence. Gladiolas line the garden entrance and ornamental plants line the wall behind a picnic table near a blackberry bush. The six fruit trees they planted promise peach and cherry blossoms next spring.

Then they had the idea of expanding onto the lot behind them to create an outdoor family movie theater. On the white wall of the building next to the lot, they recently screened *Alvin and the Chipmunks—Shipwrecked*. On that night, something magical happened: formerly vacant and abandoned lots became a family destination for a safe and fun night out.

“The evening was so different from anything that has happened here in so long,” said Estelle. “Everything went really well and lots of people in the community turned out. The movie was a big success with the youngsters!”

Recovery Corps

Recovery Corps is transforming how Baltimore tackles addiction. Recovery Corps recognizes the value of those in the city who are often forgotten and still stigmatized: individuals recovering from substance dependence. Recovery Corps identified more than 100 of these individuals who have successfully managed their recoveries for at least two years, then trained and mobilized them to serve as peer recovery advocates across the city. Because they are succeeding against all odds to stay clean, they have a wealth of experience and knowledge that they draw on to help others make the same transition from addiction to long-term recovery.

Recovery Corps is the first volunteer corps of its kind in the country created and recognized by a mayor to serve a major city. Recovery Corps is also the first time in the country that volunteer peer coaching and peer outreach has been systematically integrated into addiction treatment centers, as part of establishing a more recovery-oriented system of care in a city.

Go to <http://stepup.baltimorecity.gov>
to become a Recovery Corps member!

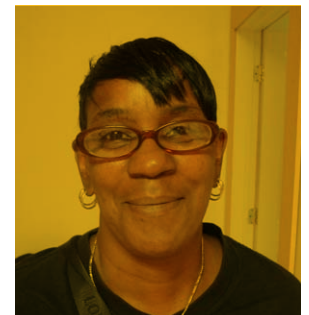
Recovery Corps Impact

Corps members have helped to strengthen people's recoveries:

- 603 individuals assisted to enter, stay in, complete, and/or manage recovery after treatment
- Provided support services or linked individuals to support services in 1180 instances

As a result of their service experience, corps members have strengthened their own recovery:

- 21 corps members who were unemployed have found employment
- 2 corps members who were either unemployed, or employed only part-time, are now serving as full-time AmeriCorps members, receiving stipends, benefits, and education scholarships
- Statistically significant increases in corps members' quality of life



Baltimore Profiles:

Tammy

“My passion is to tell others they’re not alone.”

“Being a Recovery Corps member means so much to me. I’m experiencing something I never thought I would. When I get up in the morning, I know what I’m here for.”

Latif Karim, Recovery Corps member



“I’m beginning to recognize the significance of sobriety. Garrett makes me realize that there’s hope. I know that there’s a gorilla doing push-ups out there just waiting for me to come out and return to drugs. But I like this world I’m in now. I like each and every moment of this new light.”

Steve, treatment center client, assisted by Recovery Corps member



Tammy had already lost her job and home because of her drug use, but she would soon lose even more. She remembers when she found out that the court had granted her parents guardianship of her daughter. “That killed me on the inside. I felt like I had a miscarriage, like my child was taken away from me forever.”

That sent her into a depression where her drug use became even worse. Her physical appearance changed so drastically—she lost so much weight, her facial features and eyes grew so different—that her own daughter didn’t recognize her anymore.

“I missed her so much, and when I came home to my parents that day I was going to tell them I was going to take her with me. But when I saw her, she said, ‘Mommy, is that you?’ She didn’t know who I was.” At that moment, Tammy broke down and cried and asked for help.

That was the beginning of Tammy’s turnaround, a long and difficult process of slowly rebuilding her life. Five years now into her recovery, she still discovers the effect her addiction had on her family, especially her daughter. “She had to write an essay how her parents affected her as role models, and she wrote that her mom didn’t know her. She said to me, ‘I remember you not being home.’ She’s right, I wasn’t there for her.”

Now, Tammy and her daughter spend a lot of time together. Her daughter tells Tammy every little thing that happens at school and, even though she’s older, “she still wants to hug her mommy!” Tammy said.

Her relationship with her daughter is a motivating force behind Tammy’s service in the Recovery Corps. “My passion is to tell others they’re not alone, especially mothers who’ve lost custody of their children, parents who blame themselves, I let them know they’re not alone and help them get their lives back.”

Supper Club

Supper Club bridges adult volunteers from diverse backgrounds to youth 13 to 18 years of age involved in the justice system. It re-creates, within juvenile justice facilities, the meal-time ritual of family members sitting down to share supper and conversation around the dinner table on a regular basis.

Adults come away surprised and shocked that the youth are actually a pleasure to be with, that they are respectful, open, engaging, interesting and, when it all comes down to it, just kids with hopes and fears like anyone else their age. Adults begin to understand the youth better, getting to know their personalities, challenges, and potential. Youth begin to trust the adults, offering a glimpse into their world.

Youth who are involved in the justice system usually have a limited network of relationships that go only as far as the borders of their neighborhoods. So the new connections they make to the adults—and by extension the networks of these adults—increase their access to opportunities and broaden their horizons.

Go to <http://stepup.baltimorecity.gov>
to have regular suppers and network with youth!

Supper Club Impact

- Adults report on average a 70% increase in their understanding of the youth.
- Youth report on average a 78% increase in their trust of the adults.
- 92% of adults choose to provide youth their contact information at the end of their Supper Club, demonstrating they value their newfound connections and want to maintain them.



"I looked forward to every meal and the time we got to spend with the [youth]. This is one of those volunteer opportunities that feels like a gift, not a duty."

Sonia,
Supper Club adult



Baltimore Profiles:

Anthony

Anthony is 17 years-old. He enjoys playing sports and is a typical teenager in most respects, but one thing that sets him apart from his peers is where he's currently living. He's in detention at the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center.

At the beginning of Anthony's stay at the center, he was often withdrawn and didn't like socializing with others. "I didn't really like people," he said. Then he learned about Supper Club and, like other young men at the center, decided to sign up for it. But he did something that made him stand out from the others. He consistently asked about the upcoming kick-off supper and whether or not he'd been selected to participate.

Anthony did get into Supper Club. He enjoyed all the topics he and others discussed at their dining table, but the best thing was that he began to connect with one adult in particular. Anthony felt comfortable asking him questions about almost anything and looked forward to catching up with him every week.

Anthony explains, "Now I understand that I need to be able to talk to different people. It's always good to learn something new, when other people can get something from it, too. I like it now."

Anthony is now more vocal about his emotions and problems, and he thinks about his future in greater detail than before. He's always thought about college, but now he's thinking about what he'd actually like to study. He might like to help other people.

To help him figure that and other things out, he and the adult he connected with during Supper Club have made plans to stay in touch. Anthony has remarked that this was the first time he's had such a trusting relationship with any adult, except one other person. And that person is at the forefront of his mind when asked what he plans to do after leaving the center: "Go to school and be with my mother."



"I like how the adults listen to what we have to say and how they care about our future a lot."

Jonathan, Supper Club youth



“What amazed me is how much the students enjoyed participating and how it boosted their self-confidence. Watching them give presentations at conferences was amazing. They were so professional and relaxed.”

Debbie Wooley, School-to-Work Coordinator



Baltimore CARES

Youth can be change agents and solutions to problems, if given the opportunity, and if prepared to succeed in that opportunity. Baltimore CARES worked with students from Benjamin Franklin High School at Masonville Cove, as well as youth from William Donald Schaefer House, a residential facility of the Department of Juvenile Services. These youth played an active role in developing and implementing service-learning curricula addressing a range of diverse community needs, including support to veterans, hunger and homelessness, and vacant lots. The curricula met all seven Maryland Best Practices for Service-Learning.

Go to <http://www.powerindirt.com> to access a service-learning curriculum complete with lessons any adult can use to engage middle and high school students in revitalizing a vacant lot.



**“It challenged all of my skills
and it brought out the true
leader in me.”**

Delonte, student



“This experience has changed me for the better. It’s made me a better listener, planner and researcher. Thanks to this program, I feel a little bit more prepared for the college world.”

Kelsey, student

Baltimore Profiles: Zaniya

When Zaniya enrolled at Benjamin Franklin High School in 2011, the idea of required service-learning hours was new to her. “I knew it was something about helping out the community, but I had no idea how I was going to fulfill the hours or what I would be doing. I thought I might just be filing or doing some menial job somewhere.”

But Zaniya soon found herself actively participating in the design and implementation of a service-learning project, from the beginning stage of community need and asset mapping, all the way to the final stage of creating and conducting surveys to evaluate impact. “Once our instructor began to explain, then I got it.”

As it turns out, Zaniya provided the work ethic for her group. They dubbed themselves “Team Issues” as they tackled the many challenges that arose during the project. “I never figured that we would learn so much. I didn’t think it would be so hard—or so much fun. We had to use so many skills. We made our own designs, tested soil, took measurements, and had to organize community members.”

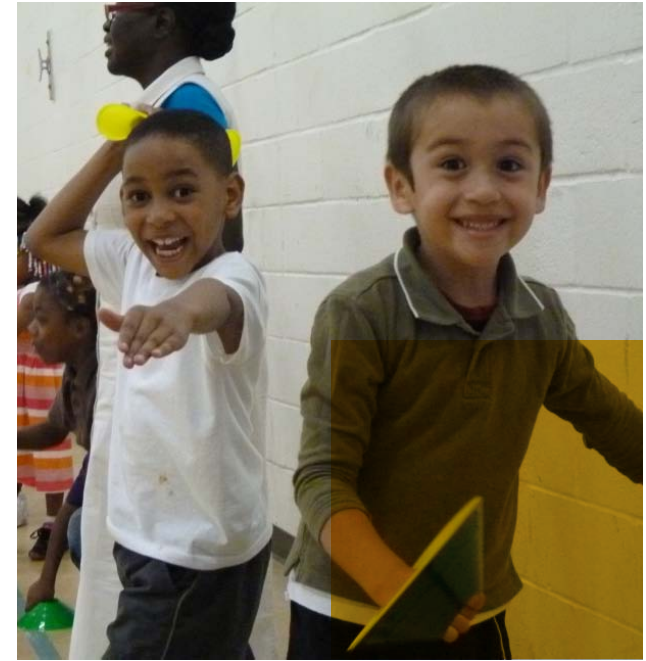
Zaniya fulfilled her service-learning hour requirement at the end of the school year. Now as a senior, she has her sights on her future. She plans to attend college, where the skills she honed during the project will certainly help her. One college has already sent her an acceptance letter.

However, reflecting on her service-learning experience, she thought something else was more important: “The best part was seeing it all come together through our hard work. I think the community was really happy about what we were doing.”



Summer of Service

United We Serve is President Obama's call to all Americans to volunteer in their communities. This summer, 44 youth from Baltimore answered the President's call and became **AmeriCorps VISTA** summer associates. They helped 1400 kindergarten through third grade students from low-income families read better, learn more, stay fit, make new friends, and eat healthy in the city's first full-day summer learning camp, Read to Succeed Plus! What's more, through their service experience, the 44 youth increased their own college and career readiness, and earned \$88,000 in stipends and \$52,000 in education awards.





“This summer was such a big help to my son’s reading and preparing him for next year. The trips and swimming were also great. It felt good that he was able to have fun this summer. Because of my financial situation I’m not able to take him many places.”

Parent of Read to Succeed Plus! student

Baltimore Profiles:

Brian

Brian knows something about struggling for a better life. Brian is homeless and has been on his own since he was 15 years old. “I made some poor choices early in life and the streets got the better of me,” Brian admits.

Yet with the assistance of community organizations providing shelter, counseling, and services, Brian finished high school. He’s grateful for all the people who have helped him along the way. Not only did they provide him the support he needed, they also provided him a model for doing good.

“AmeriCorps was my opportunity to give back,” Brian explained. It was his chance to help Baltimore children gain the tools he didn’t have, so that they could go on to a brighter future.

Brian took his responsibility seriously. Every hot summer morning, he left his transitional housing to catch a public bus bound for Coleman Elementary School. There he led kids in academic and extra-curricular learning activities, using the same leadership skills that elected him captain of his high school football team. With just a simple gesture from him, the wide-eyed kids buried their faces in books, or snapped to attention to focus on games that teach social skills and teamwork.

“I’m sure I had an influence on my kids, especially with the reading program,” Brian said. “They were struggling at the beginning, but the 100 Book Challenge really worked.”

While Brian is proud of what he accomplished during his summer of service, he doesn’t have much time to pause and reflect. He still has to find steady employment and still needs a place of his own. He’s pursuing every option and, in the meantime, he’s planning some day to start college with the help of his AmeriCorps education award.

“AmeriCorps was my opportunity to give back.”

Third Grade Reads

Initiative

Third Grade Reads will provide two hours of volunteer-led, one-on-one literacy tutoring per week to 250 first, second, and third graders in four pilot schools who are reading between 0.5 and 2.5 grade levels below benchmark. All tutors use a structured curriculum that is based on best teaching practices, grade-level requirements, and a balanced-literacy approach.

Goal

- Students advance, on average, two and a half times faster than before they received one-on-one tutoring.
- Students achieve, on average, one grade level increase in reading skills after 26 hours of tutoring.

Facts

Being a proficient reader by the end of third grade is a strong predictor of going on to graduate from high school. Students who do not master reading skills early on have a difficult time acquiring all the information and knowledge they need in later grades. As a result, they struggle academically, lose interest and motivation as they get older, and tend to have more behavioral and social problems. Eventually, they drop out of school.

In Baltimore, according to Maryland School Assessment scores for the 2011 school year, 31% of fourth graders scored below proficient in reading. When compared to fourth graders nationally, 89% of Baltimore fourth graders scored below proficient, according to National Assessment of Education Progress scores, released in 2011.

Go to <http://www.thirdgradereads.com> to sign up to be a tutor!
You can be the reading angel who changes a child's life forever.



The evidence is clear that being a proficient reader by the end of third grade is a strong predictor of going on to graduate from high school.



Count Me In

Initiative

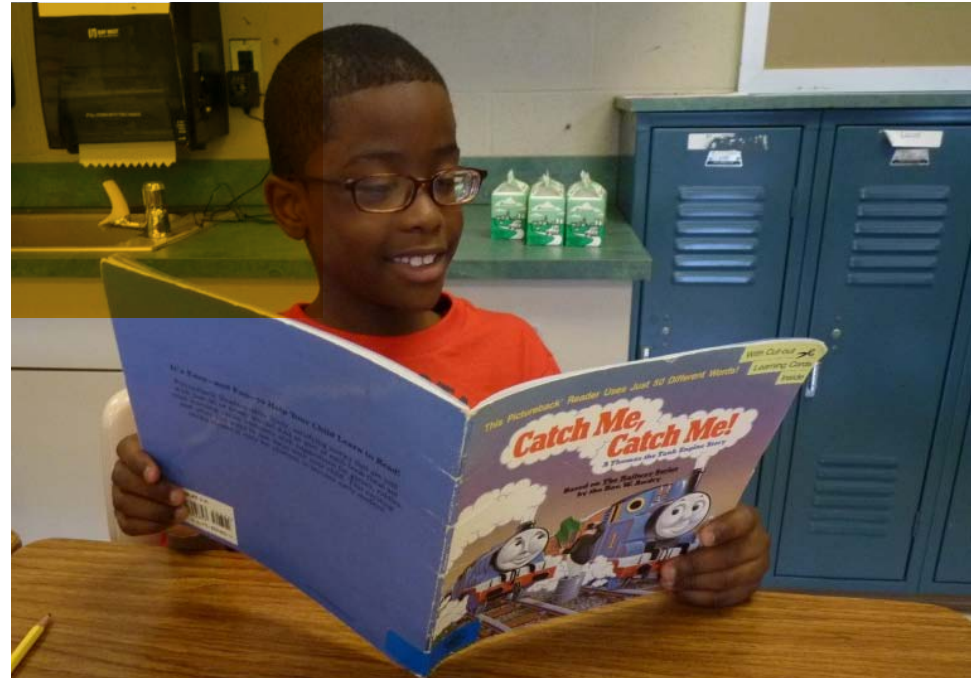
Count Me In will provide extra support early on to up to 720 students who are at risk of being chronically absent from school. At four schools, teams of corporate volunteers will mentor and follow up with targeted students; and implement projects that help improve the school-going culture and environment for all students and parents. At five schools, professionally trained community volunteers will conduct attendance mediation between teachers, parent/caregivers, and students (if they are of middle school age). The mediation allows participants to meet in a non-judgmental setting to identify causes of absences and agree to solutions that work for everyone.

Goal

- 70% of students who receive regular mentoring and follow-up increase their attendance rate.
- 75% of students who are referred to mediation and attend mediation increase their attendance rate.
- Four schools receiving attendance supports improve their school attendance culture and climate.
- Four schools receiving attendance supports increase their average daily attendance rates.
- Four schools receiving attendance supports reduce their chronic absence rates.

Facts

Students who miss at least 10%, or approximately one month, of school in one school year, are considered to be chronically absent. For Baltimore City Public Schools in the 2011 school year, 13% of elementary, 16% of middle, and 41% of high school students were chronically absent. Students who are not in school are not learning. According to the Maryland School Assessment for the 2011 school year, an average of only 50% of these students scored proficient or advanced in math and reading, compared with an average of close to 70% of their high-attending peers.



Special thanks to our leading partners who support all of the stepUP! initiatives:



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NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE

Implementing Partners

Power in Dirt

Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development

Baltimore City Department of Planning

Baltimore City Department of Public Works

Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks

Baltimore City Department of Transportation

Baltimore Green Space

Blue Water Baltimore

Bon Secours Foundation

Citizens Planning and Housing Association

Civic Works

Community Greening Resource Network

Greater Homewood Community Corporation

Historic East Baltimore Community Action Coalition

Parks and People Foundation

Recovery Corps

Baltimore Community Resource Center

Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc

Baltimore Substance Abuse Systems

Family Health Centers of Baltimore—Cherry Hill

Family Recovery Program

Gaudenzia

IBR-REACH

Johns Hopkins Broadway Center for Addiction

Man Alive Lane Treatment Center

My Brother's Keeper

Recovery Community Center

Recovery Network

Supper Club

Baltimore City Department of Juvenile Services

Boys and Girls Clubs of Metropolitan Baltimore

Mayor's Office of Employment Development, YO! Baltimore

Summer of Service

Baltimore City Public Schools

Mayor's Office of Employment Development, YouthWorks

Parks and People Foundation

Baltimore CARES

Baltimore City Public Schools

Baltimore City Department of Juvenile Services

University of Maryland Baltimore County, Shriver Center

Third Grade Reads

Baltimore City Public Schools

Family League of Baltimore City

Reading Partners

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Baltimore City Public Schools

Business Volunteers Unlimited

Community Mediation

Community Mediation Maryland

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University of Maryland School of Law, Center for Dispute Resolution

Volunteer Partners

CollegeTown Network

Enoch Pratt Free Library

Johns Hopkins University, Center for Social Concern

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Maryland DC Campus Compact

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Count Me In



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